

PROPERTY PLANNING COMMON ELEMENTS

COMPONENTS OF MASTER PLANS

RECREATION ACTIVITIES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

Target Shooting – Firearms and Archery

Desired Experiences and Site Selection Considerations

This activity involves various forms of target shooting with rifles, pistols, shotguns, bows and crossbows. Targets can be two- or three-dimensional. Gun ranges differ in the opportunities provided; some are limited to just sighting in firearms while others have facilities that accommodate short (25 feet) to long distance (200 yards) shooting for pistols and rifles as well as trap, skeet, and sporting clays. In addition, some ranges also have facilities for archery and crossbow target shooting.

Safety is an overarching concern at ranges and is particularly acute at gun ranges. Modern gun ranges use large earthen backstops, side berms, shooting sheds with baffles, and other strategies to minimize sounds and maximize safety. Some facilities are supervised with range monitors while others are not. Ranges are used by people who enjoy the challenge of hitting targets (from bullseyes to clays) and visit ranges in order to develop better marksmanship skills. Others use ranges as a means to sight in their equipment in preparation for hunting. Both types of users seek safe, well-constructed ranges.

There are two types of archery ranges: spot-style and walk-through ranges. Spot-style ranges provide a series of different distances to stationary two-dimensional targets. These require cleared areas with relatively short grass, including behind the targets, to be able to find wayward arrows. Walk-through ranges follow a trail with targets at a variety of distances (10 to 60 yards) and angles. Preferred settings are a 4' to 8' mowed trail about a mile in length through savanna, forest, or river/stream habitats with moderate topographical relief. Trail layout must incorporate a design that makes it safe for all users and thus areas beyond the target have to be closed to use.

Gun ranges may be built on department lands where the range is compatible with the surrounding land use. Some considerations (WDNR 2014) to take into account include:

- noise disturbance to residences within 1,000 yards
- avoid wetlands or hydric soils or soils with hydric inclusions
- avoid State Natural Areas
- avoid archeological sites
- direct road access is preferred
- minimize impact on other recreational users
- minimize impact on blocks of wildlife habitat
- topography that is supportive of developing a shooting range



There are 10 firearm ranges on department lands that are open to the public and an additional 52 ranges open to the public operated by other government agencies, clubs, businesses, and other organizations. Although there are ranges in all parts of the state, most people in urban centers need to travel some distance to find a range that fits their needs. Archery target shooting is provided at some ranges.

Notable Differences in Participation or Opportunities Across the State

Target shooting occurs across the state, but demand is strongest and supply most limiting in more populated urban-suburban areas of the state. In particular, there are fewer opportunities for firearm target shooting in southeast Wisconsin.

Notable Times of the Year of High or Low Participation

Participation is highest in summer and fall, and less active in the spring.

Participation

Participation Rate and Frequency

Based on a 2016 survey of Wisconsin residents conducted for the development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), it is estimated that 29% of adult Wisconsin residents participate in target firearm shooting and 19% participate in target archery shooting. These ranked #26 and #36, respectively, out of 64 activities evaluated.

Days/year	% of Target Firearm Shooters	% of Target Archers
1 to 2	33	27
3 to 9	35	31
10 to 29	21	27
30 or more	12	16
Total	100%	100%

In terms of frequency, participants that engaged in target firearms shooting and target archery did so more frequently than participants in most other activities (they ranked #23 and #10, respectively, in frequency out of 64 activities evaluated).

Estimated Trends

A report done for the National Shooting Sports Association states that target shooting continues to grow nationwide (Allen et al. 2013). Nearly half of active target shooters introduce a newcomer to the range or field each year.

Demographics

As can be seen from the SCORP survey results in the tables below, participants in target firearm shooting in Wisconsin are well represented across age groups, with even participation by gender and relatively even by type of residence. Conversely, participants in target archery shooting tend to be younger, rural men.



Target Firearm Shooting

Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
Age	18-29	37	26
	30-39	32	20
	40-49	34	17
	50-59	30	19
	60-69	21	13
	70 and older	14	5
	Total	--	100
Gender	Female	38	50
	Male	39	50
	Total	--	100
Residence	Rural	41	47
	Urban	38	53
	Total	--	100

Target Archery Shooting

Demographic Category	Demographic Group	% Participation Rate Within Demographic Category	% Composition of Demographic Category (sums to 100%)
Age	18-29	28	30
	30-39	22	22
	40-49	25	19
	50-59	18	18
	60-69	11	9
	70 and older	6	3
	Total	--	100
Gender	Female	13	34
	Male	26	66
	Total	--	100
Residence	Rural	26	65
	Urban	13	35
	Total	--	100

References

Allen, T., R. Southwick, J. Curcuruto, W. Zwohl, D. Howlett, and C. Larrimore. 2013. *Target Shooting in America*. National Shooting Sports Foundation.



WDNR. 2014. *Shooting Ranges in Wisconsin: Strategic Guidance, 2014-2019*. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Madison, WI. Presented at the May, 2014 Natural Resources Board Meeting.
<https://dnr.wi.gov/about/nrb/>

